

Netherlands take the spoils at Canterbury and record their first win over England at Over 80 – April 2024

The historic city of Canterbury was the venue for this year's annual Over 80 clash between England and Netherlands, played at Polo Farm Sports Cub on Thursday 17th April. The media had been attracted to the game by the claim that this was probably the oldest official international match in any team sport and cameras from both BBC and ITV were there to cover the action and marvel at the fitness of the two sides. After three unsuccessful attempts the Dutch were keen to register their first win over their old rivals. Led by 88 year-old Walter Hagedoorn, the Netherlands proved to be a lively opposition for an England side that was slow to get into the game. Rob Struik, making his first appearance at Over 80 for the Netherlands, was a constant problem for the England defence and it was no surprise when he beat two defenders before rounding the goalkeeper and putting Netherlands ahead after 7 minutes. England battled to stay in the game but failed to control midfield with few incursions into their opponents' half. At the other end the Dutch continued to probe and were unlucky not to go two up when the half-time whistle blew just ahead of their slotting a second goal. In the second half play continued much as before with England soaking up the pressure. After several unsuccessful penalty corners the Dutch striker Adrian Uildriks eventually beat goalkeeper Chris Long to put the Dutch two ahead and although England spent some time on the edge of their opponents' D in the final quarter there was no real threat and the score remained 2-0 at full time. The Dutch had proved much the better team on the day and England had never recovered from a slow start which had them on the back foot for most of the game. England salvaged some pride with a 3-1 win in the friendly run-out the following morning but that was no great surprise since the Netherlands had, as might have been expected, celebrated to a greater extent than England the previous evening!

In the first B international at Over 80, Netherlands also came out on top with a 3-1 win in the main event and a 3-0 win the following morning. In the international match, an early goal by Laurens Nauta was cancelled out by Rod Cochrane's equaliser just before half time. However in the second half the Dutch proved too strong and a goal by Harm Rasterhoff restored their lead soon after the restart. The game was finally sealed when Nauta scored again just before the end. England captains Ken Wilcock and Nigel Strofton presented the two trophies to their Dutch equivalents at the dinner that evening and looked forward to next year's re-match at Breda in the Netherlands. Over 80 hockey is now well established and both teams look forward to a challenge from Australia this summer, who will be bringing their touring team, Southern Cross, to the festival tournament in The Hague in June where more than 50 teams, men and women, will compete in age groups from Over 60 to Over 80.